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"What a chimera then is man! What a novelty! What a monster, what a chaos,
what a contradiction, what a prodigy! . . ."—*Pascal*

CHIMERA

A LITERARY QUARTERLY

EDITORS

BARBARA HOWES

XIMENA DE ANGULO

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Sonnet

by Emily Mosser Tompkins



Pain is the voice; and illness is the child
That stares in mirrors when the grownups weep.
Even the nursemaid snivels in her sleep,
Yet this is not Doomsday. This must be mild.

Love is what fed, and said, Now now, and smiled,
But supper was bad today, and love is cheap.
Outside are snakes, and you can see what's deep:
Woods are one's own; not frightening, only wild.

Till the mother wakes; says No! to the auctioneer,
And calls her darling from the kitchen door.
So he comes back. But what do they want him for?

Or perhaps he will stay. For what do they mean, my dear?
Is he in the alders? Is he out of his mind?
Has he gone too far in the swamp? Too far to find?

Delta Cycle

A STUDY OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

by James Turner Jackson



I FIND it easy to imagine how a leaking tanker on Lake Michigan, bound north for Duluth, can flower out an oil slick which, at some later time, will streak the river shore at New Orleans in Louisiana. By a similar license I can imagine how—moving first down the Great Lakes, then through a backwards-running river in Chicago, then draining across Indiana and, while never moved by hill or tide, down the Mississippi and ultimately to the Gulf—the morning oatmeal from a family table in Wisconsin, once thrown in the town's waste, may come at last to feed the tarpon off the glades of Florida.

Yet, in substance, these are modest facts; and in comparison to a prophecy of Mark Twain's, drawn from a magazine at the time of the Civil War, they seem almost niggardly. That earlier prediction was simply stated: "The Basin of the Mississippi is the Body of the Nation, all other parts are but members . . . As a dwelling place for civilized man, it is by far the first upon our globe." William Faulkner's principal effort in his fiction has been to detail, and even implement, such a prophecy.

The Valley's past is a short past, which Faulkner has entered by way of the Cumberland Gap. Here at the Gap, more than a hundred years ago, the first great decision was made; and, by Faulkner's account, the irrepressible conflict set in motion. Here was a geographical marker far more reaching, in its consequences, than any Mason-Dixon line. The men who came here, many of them, were immigrants who had not stopped over at the coastal points, who had not been weathered in their neo-European, colonial tradition; but rather had been beckoned, it seemed, direct from Eu-

rope by the exploits of Boone and Hugh Glass and others, whose success might now become a measure of their own.

There in the high Smokies, there on the rim, the upper reaches of the Basin, the Valley's future was placed in reckoning. Two routes lay open: one to the South, along the Tennessee River; one to the North, along the Ohio and its tributaries. How many of us owe our present manner of speech, our present religious denomination, to some day in 1830, perhaps, when it looked muddy on the trail north, and muddy on the trail south, and some great-great-grandfather spun a coin, and took one route before the other, for good and all?

Yet Faulkner qualifies this decision, and for those progenitors of his main families, the original Sutpens and Sartoris, even the Snopes, he rules out chance and substitutes circumstances at once revealing and premonitory. These men had heard the rumor of a delta in the Basin, an immeasurably rich, always growing land which was its outlet and its key. Some of them, having put in at Spanish ports, came for gold, not corn. Yet for whatever reason or purpose men came, by 1840, in great numbers and along most of its length, the River had been reached.

It is with the Sutpens, the Sartoris—these men who preempted, who staked down the Delta—that Faulkner is principally concerned. They are his index, his gauge; in some ways, his mirror of the valley whole. Here in a situation almost Egyptian, upon a ripe land lying between Memphis and New Orleans, Faulkner has focused his thought and his belief.

Perhaps every man believes there is some eminence in the mind, or some high detached station in memory, from which he may gain a purview, even direct, his destiny—some place from which, it seems, the very climate and contour of his life originate and may be viewed. And in an offguard moment, he imagines he can attain this eminence, and there, detached and passive, stand above the light and movement of his years. So Faulkner believes. And through his work, as a consequence, there runs a structural, and—it might be said—a philosophical device of the greatest importance. It is the device of the seasons: first as they pertain to the land

itself, and then concurrently, as they pertain to the corresponding seasons in those men who live upon the land. In a cycle, then, slowly turning through many books, dim at first and river-like, Faulkner's thought gains shape: from the time the delta was young, and the people upon it young (here, in the novels *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Unvanquished*, it was a season of spring); through a season of summer, in *Light in August*; and finally to a season of fall and impending winter, in his most recent short stories, with such titles as *Red Leaves*, *The Old People*, *Delta Autumn*, and, at the very end, *Go Down, Moses*.

When the Sutpens, the Sartoris, came, they found the Indian before them on the Delta. He was an autumnal Indian, so to speak, who was not nomadic, who could be neither bought nor bonded. From such a redman, Faulkner fashions a precedent, a guiding primitive; and, ignoring Cooper, whose fiction impressed one prevailing conception of the Indian upon America and the world at large, Faulkner pictures a regal barbarian after the model set by Brockden Brown, a man of "tawny and terrific visage," a fantastic man in a quiescent tradition, who lives sequestered in this wilderness while further west his brother tribes fight "the great struggles for the Bison Pastures." There is no hint here of the colonist's conception of the redman as a murderous savage; instead, there is the belief that the white man slowly lost what he respected in the redskin, to become what, at a later time, he feared in the Negro.

Faulkner works back to an Indian whose figurative diction, whose warrior heroes, whose chivalry to women, whose stoic attitude towards hardship, whose implacable hatreds he believes to have infused and conditioned the Southern character—in a growing delta precipitate of virtues and standards. And in whose tribal independence, and at times inter-tribal animosities, Faulkner finds one seed of regional feud, of War between States. And in whose figure of a Red Messiah, he sees the prototype of countless white variants in the political and religious South from that day forward. From this redskin's Man of Adamant, who strangely enough was also a puritan ideal—being first a theological creation, then, subsequently, a pioneer hero—Faulkner has taken example for many of

his delta men, members of the Sartoris and Sutpen and related families. Indeed, the influence of Puritanism upon the Delta, as Faulkner sees it, was fecundative; it was not vitiating. Of a woman of Puritan ancestry in *Light in August*, he says, "At first it shocked him: the abject fury of the New England glacier exposed suddenly to the fire of the New England biblical hell. Perhaps he was aware of the abnegation in it: the proud and fierce urgency." But finally it was the valley Indian who, drawing from a purgative practice of his own, was to provide the Southerner with an inkling of his destiny, and a term for the vicissitudes he might suffer in a later season. This was a cruel ritual in which a white captive faced two long files of Indian braves, who were armed with knives and warclubs. If he could run their length and survive, he was released from further torture. To such a barbaric ritual of judgment and redemption, the Southerner might later apply the term "the gauntlet."

In this earliest season, however, the gauntlet remains in the offing. Another regal barbarian is brought in, a man like the Indian, but one who, losing his exoticism, becomes the delta slave, the canebrake peasant. He is the Negro. And the early Southern Baptist may now, paralleling the New England Calvinist in the case of the Indian, fall first upon his knees, then upon the Negro. For in him, after he has cut the canebrakes, cleared the cypress swamps, the Southerner will find his substitute, his proxy, to run the gauntlet for him. Nonetheless, in direct opposite to the New England practice, miscegenation is not yet outlawed on the Delta.

Here then, at an equinox, at a vernal time, Faulkner begins to chart the blood-precedents he will carry through to the present. From an Indian's regal savagery will be compounded a Sutpen's arrogance; from a Negro's innocence a Sartoris' cruelty. And from the exigencies of a land vaguely charted, remotely ruled, the Delta's predatory code. Yet from the River there comes still some continuity of interest, some kinship that is valley-wide and high, some feeling of what one writer has said was missing in men since the Renaissance: mass expectancy.

Time in the cycle changes: it is spring. But already there is an addling of the seasons in the valley, a verging break-up and trun-

cation. To the north and west, despite Webster's admonition, "What do we want with this vast, worthless area?" men spread over the vast distances in space, in a far shorter span of time. And despite Webster's further admonition, "Mr. President, I will never vote one cent from the Public Treasury to place the Pacific Coast one inch nearer to Boston than it is now," the frontier remains open until, a decade before the War, the coast is reached. And while it would seem that thought, as well as place, might still be measured by longitude, not latitude, the Delta becomes even more rigidly capsulated than New Orleans with its different past. The valley no longer moves in any tempo, any harmony, as a contiguous whole; the synchronization of interests, implicit in its topography, is not achieved. On the Delta alone, as Faulkner realizes, a Confederacy now exists in everything but name.

On this land enduringly won, enduringly fertile, Sutpen attempts a barony. But as the frontiers around him become sectional, and the mode of pioneering changes, now, for the first time, speculation has a discernible limit; and his greed can be gauged accordingly. When the mode alters, his aspirations alter with it, slowly. An irrepressible, half-mythic Sutpen leaves an empire in the bottom lands to his descendent—a son who is no longer a nester, or even a settler in any transient sense, subject to periodic nomadism—but a son who dutifully places his father's mocassins and his grandmother's bit of stained glass from Virginia, as curios, on the congress table in the parlor. Up the river, other men are pulling stakes for one last time; making way for creosoted fenceposts and strongwire which, if they wish to avoid lawsuit, will be bullstrong, horsehigh and pigtight. And when the topsoil is farmed off, they face the necessity of farming the subsoils. On the Delta, the stakes are left. Nothing changes. Sutpen feels he is rooted, everlastingly, in his depthless loam.

This western breakdown—into particulars of what had been immensities, into actualities of what had been potentialities—touched everywhere. It is found in the fragmentation of the polyglot frontier language into regional dialects: nouns that in many cases were inherited from the New England Primer might be standardized;

but the adjectives became increasingly sectional. And Calvinism, with its arbitrary notions of predestination and eternal damnation—also inherited from the North—split into patterns more baroque. So that only in Iowa and Nebraska, perhaps, was any pattern of American Gothic possible.

Reckoned by this almanac of Faulkner's, in a cycle over a century in length, spring broke early in the Delta; it broke later in the valley elsewhere. The Sutpens move further out of step, absenting themselves from the gauntlet taking place up river—that record of endurance, of heroism less easy to assess than theirs, of suffering perhaps more dramatically, if less melodramatically endured than theirs, the Sutpens', in the war to come; that record of generosity and greed, and passion infinitely variegated, in all those who laid their bones, as the figure has it, from the Cumberland Gap to the Pacific Coast. In each book Faulkner casts the larger scene against the smaller, the one, in its present ills, symptomatic of the other, in its later ills. Here, for example, against this moiling and tumultuous compost, this bloody matrix of western America, he gives this Delta scene: plantations consolidated and secured in the thinning wilderness. And again, to the north, against that gauntlet and trial before the War—that slow business which stretched hundreds of miles for those who ran it, through a blasting Iowa sun, Dakota blizzards, Blackfoot and Sioux, then the arduous foothills of the Rockies; or, for others, the southwestern badman and the treacherous greaser, the shot in the dark and the stab in the back, the crazy dangers of California, of Death Valley and the Barbary Coast in '49—against all this, Sutpen, or Sartoris, or any Delta man, favored by climate, trumping up his patchwork orthodoxy of fine living, attempting to make permanent his stockade of privilege and preference, cherishing heirlooms and mementoes of the braver past. Outside this stockade is no longer the Indian, however, but a representative of the Snopes family, that wheedling, ubiquitous breed—the poor white.

And then summer, and the War: even before the Regions could be defined, before any gearing of them, joining of them, synchronization of them could be attempted, the States had fought. And

Sherman had marched a square around the Confederacy, making of it again, in title, a Union; so that the River might flow unvexed to the sea and the integrity of the Basin might be assured. Certainly Faulkner believes the war was fought over the River or, more specifically, the River basin; and that, while by other standards its results could be said to be the first clear-cut decision, in modern times, for "a national hegemony over a continental area," for Sutpen it meant fresh mementoes in the parlor, brought home from Shiloh and Antietam; and a belief that here was his gauntlet, unending, from that day to this; and a cast of mind by which he fought and then endured defeat, set down in *Light in August*: "Memory believes before knowing remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders." He was the "unvanquished" who would never be converted from secession to loyalty, but rather, would attempt to patch together his ante-bellum orthodoxy. So there would be a laying-on of hands now, as a final persuasion against treachery among those facing the common threat, the common ordeal; there would be a speaking in the tongues now, a proud bitter language, or an oracle, a still small voice to lead them spiritually or physically from harm, as the case might be; and there would be camp meetings, Klans, conspiracies of the unadventurous; and the prayerful hope for a talisman among the war's salvage; there would be the feud, initiated in or complicated by the War—a Cain and Abel tragedy in linsey-woolsey, butternut and blue. This was the summer when the harvest rotted.

In autumn, Delta autumn, Sutpen's grandson hunts in the dying wilderness with an Indian's grandson. Sutpen is now the static man; his slave is now the wandering Negro, a man who, in *Light in August*, bears a prophetic name: Joe Christmas. Sutpen has come from the grim bus-stop, successor of the one-horse town, where the regal barbarian has been supplanted by the cigarstore Indian, the adventurous Sartoris by the drugstore cowboy; the freebooter by the industrialized poor white, who, in turn, is descendant of the carpetbagger, the bushwacker, whose commercial inroads on his dwindling barony fix fast a legend of continuous

gauntlet which he stoically endures. Sutpen may be an itinerant, whose travel is no longer martial nor venturesome but a token of his discontent, lacking both in the disciplined movement of the former, and the trailblazing intransigence of the latter. He may be a traditionalist whose nodal experience remains, not in any processional of frontier, either agricultural or industrial, but in a legend of his past. In either case, he is a trapped man, who will not attempt to find his home by moving away from it.

That, briefly, is the cycle; and from it, I believe, Faulkner envisions two outcomes. The first is given in *Go Down, Moses*: it is simply a wilderness, both symbolic and actual, peopled by the old, the sage, the discontented, and the half-witted. This first outcome is best crystallized in the idiot. He is found in all of Faulkner's recent work. He is the perfect mirror: he cannot speak, he cannot change. He is the sum, the end-all, of an abortive past. His is a new blood-precedent, coming from a corruption of the old. Yet, significantly, the idiot is not narcissistic.

I have a memory of such a wilderness. It is said that a man named Jim Bridger first stumbled on this kindred place; and I believe it might represent the Delta, or in a larger way, as Faulkner intentionally represents the Delta, this country since 1870. I remember the piece of it an uncle brought back from the far west. It was put on the mantel. I imagine other pieces can be found all over the country.

This was the petrified forest, and apparently Jim Bridger was the discoverer. I remember the garbled accounts I heard; the picture I carried when I was young of trees standing out there in great stony lanes, of birds nesting or at the moment of flight frozen in stone, of deer caught and petrified like marble fauna on a Victorian greensward: in short, the picture and idea I had of one small area of western land and life inexorably trapped, fixed, hardened, calcified for good in a place of insufferable and unending lassitude. Like that of the sea-pastures of brit in *Moby Dick* where an albatross hovers with a granite motionlessness, like the cobalt sky and leaden spiritual weather in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of Seven Gables*, like that strange multiple sclerosis at work in the

giant figures of Cooper who, starting out sunny and lightminded in the *Pioneers* and *Deerslayer* and *Pathfinder*, fall becalmed in *The Prairie*, victims of that free space all the way to the Rockies, and of their own tiring flesh and spirit when they come against hard rock and a literal Death Valley; and where Natty Bumpo, the progenitor of Leatherstocking and Pathfinder and the rest, dies fixed in a chair high in the Rocky Mountains, his eyes turned eastward! And at the end of this trek—to expand the picture—the bones and wreckage, the gold dust, the tallest trees in the world and perhaps the tallest man, who cannot be dwarfed physically, yet can yield to the small fine petrifications of his landbound quest, and who has only to stand still long enough to stand as a marker at his own grave. And at the end of it—to narrow the field to places and writers of the present time, and to advance the chronology—a modern Hollywood, and what someone might call a Lost Angelus, examined beneath the hand-lens of other men than Faulkner: Scott Fitzgerald, West, Thurber and others. Brittle tappings are heard now in the petrified forest. Under their hammers artifacts are exhumed of petty religiosity and subliminal evangelism, skulduggery and easy miracles, raffish architecture: a culture in pink stucco, in spurious bronze fretwork, a giddy, latter-day Pompeii. And so, for the people who made this journey, or another, a kind of final Sargasso in stone. That is one outcome.

As I remember, the most popular magician in the Twenties was the Escape Artist. He was any traveling Houdini who, having been welded into a tank from the local foundry, and that tank then thrown in the local river or lake, could, in a matter of minutes, triumphantly work his way free. Leg-irons, handcuffs and the like were, of course, child's play for him. Then this attraction was succeeded in popularity, in the Thirties and early Forties, by the Quiz Show—that phenomenon of modern radio. In a time first of national, then global questioning, what could be more natural—the old pat questions, the old pat answers. Certain recent novelists have mimicked either the first artist mentioned, or followed the pattern of the second, the Quiz Master, with his lavish and easy prizes. In offering this second outcome, I would say that Faulkner

has followed neither course. His alternative to the petrified forest is a simple one: it is the belief in the possibility of a hibernal South, a hibernal Delta and, taking the latter as brother to the whole, a belief in a hibernal democracy in this country. "This delta," he writes, "This delta . . . Maybe in a thousand or two thousand years in America but not now! This land which man has deswamped and denuded and derivered in two generations . . ." After this wilderness, he continues in *Go Down, Moses*, "this wilderness . . . tremendous and impartial and waiting," something more than weeds must follow. And Faulkner believes that eventuality to be this: These old men, these Sutpen and Sartoris grandfathers have done powerful things, and what things they started they have finished. But after death the bed is always made again. And the denominator of the vision of all men, in any season, is more or less the same. Are not Americans resting, consequently, not merely waiting? Resting now, not in peace or plenitude from any laurels won, but resting still from some deep strain, deep wear, the deep tears and dispositions of westering. Resting even from the Revolution and from early conquest and the preliminary settlings of the middle borders and, for the most part, not yet girding for the next great move, but rather resting only, with an immense vitality for the time impaired.

Yet this slack period in camp has been lengthened inordinately, beyond its season, Faulkner believes; prolonged, in part, by the subsequent wars and trials which, growing from a grandfather's harsh victory over earlier foes, were left as dubious legacies for his sons to endure at a later time: the Civil and the Spanish-American and the wars in Europe—wars fought always after some delay and with emotions grown slightly stagnant, then fought hard in what Faulkner says is arrogance and pride and diffidence, since we "learn nothing save through suffering, remember nothing save when underlined in blood."

And now peace, peace even, he believes, remains only a limited objective, neither the present nor the ultimate goal. The mark of the wilderness, lying forever upon our spirit, precludes inaction. "No wonder the ruined woods I used to know don't cry for retri-

bution," he writes in *Delta Autumn*. "The people who have destroyed it will accomplish its revenge." They are the fathers who halted where their fathers built and, resting there, have done so with the implicit notion of Thinking Back, of Reverting—who are forced to live in herds, Faulkner suggests, to protect themselves from their own sources; who have built of brick-and-mortar, not stop-gap frame, and bolstered the Hometown and the Union with atavism and patriot calls and nourished the status quo ante, the State, the Eagle—while all around them their sons wander in the seething body and life of this country. These men are the carpet-baggers among us, Faulkner believes, and theirs is the outrage and the railing, who have inherited something in the common flesh and legend that does not entail, or else reneges, the common prospect.

And so, in this hibernal, if not final, stage of the cycle, men are resting in frame tents, in jerrybuilt camps, in the heartland. They live above the ashpits of the revivals and the cross-burnings in Kentucky, and experience still the drifting passions of those times. They rest in the clearings where first the wagons halted, and the sick and the weak stepped down, where some of the strong died at the Stockade, and others made camp, to breed the breed strong again. It is Faulkner's belief that American minds have strange memories. Sutpen's grandson has an overpowering recall of his grandfathers, those old men who came, and their sons, who have come but have not moved on. The actions remembered in Faulkner's annals are the actions of these grandfathers which, if they do not commit descendents to a further action, nevertheless will not fade from memory. In this season of interregnum, violence finds its breeding time; and for many men the gauntlet becomes an incessant inner ritual of mind and conscience. For some men, now, there remains neither redemption nor resurrection when such a gauntlet has been run; instead, there remains only the certainty of damnation. Yet Sutpen's grandson feels he will go elsewhere and do great things, subservient, perhaps, to the will and memory of his grandfather. He will pick up, he will move along. He will do what will seem full in the memory of what his grandfather has done, in coming here.

In his most recent work, Faulkner has fashioned a great and powerful analogue of earth and man. Man and the wilderness are coevals in this country, he has said, and the doom of one accomplishes the doom of the other. Yet the wilderness can no more be utterly destroyed than can man be utterly dispossessed. And therefore men can wait still, sensing there is no injustice in this doom, knowing it to be the consequence of an earlier season, which will be visited, impersonally, upon their position and their place, not upon their person. Expect no rebellion, is the reading I would make, either by deed or thought. There is this instead: the unheeding, diffident, thoughtless lull which precedes great movement.

"And the earth is shallow," Faulkner writes, in his final development of that analogue, "There is not a great deal of it before you come to rock. And the earth don't want to just keep things, hoard them; it wants to use them again." From the dark alluvial curve of the Delta, he can watch the River—no longer a demarcation or a controversy. He can look upon an immense and quiet land of industrialized encampment, where people wait to hold—perhaps in some further revolution of the cycle—"the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood," or to move in a nearing season, as Twain would want it, towards the fullest implication of a dwelling place—a Union.

Spain in the Heart*

by Pablo Neruda



I

MADRID, 1936

I lived in a quarter
of Madrid with bells,
with clocks, with trees.

Spread all around
arid and parched, the face of Castille
spreading like an ocean of leather.

My house was called
the house of flowers because everywhere
was the explosion of geraniums: it was
a beautiful house
with dogs and with children.

Raul, do you remember?
Do you remember, Rafael?
Federico, do you remember,
under the earth,
do you remember my house with balconies where
the light of June drowned flowers in your mouth?

Brother, Brother!

All around
great rumor of voices, salty merchandise,

* These poems are two sections of a long poem *España en el Corazon* written in 1936-37.

throbbing agglomeration of loaves,
markets of my quarter of Arguelles with its statue
like a pallid inkwell among the paler fish;
oil flowing to spoon,
deep throbbing
of feet and hands filling the streets.
Yard-sticks, pints, quarts and gallons,
acute awareness of life,
 rising mounds of fish,
tumbling patterns of roofs in the chill sun
cold and weary weather-vanes
 unbelievable fine ivory of potatoes
tomatoes spreading, sea to meet the sea.

And one morning all was burning,
and one morning the fires
burst from the ground
devouring people,
and since then fire,
gun-powder, since then
and since then, blood.

Bandits with planes and with moors,
bandits with rings and with duchesses,
bandits with black priests blessing
came out of heaven to kill children
and in the streets the blood of children
flowing simply, like blood of children.

Jackals by jackal reviled,
Stones by thistle bitten and regurgitated.
Vipers by vipers loathed!

To oppose you I have seen the blood
of Spain rise

to drown you in one single wave
of hatred and of knives!

Generals

betrayers

behold my house now dead,

behold broken Spain:

but from every dead house burning metal is pouring
instead of flowers;

but from every hollow in Spain
comes forth Spain;

but from every dead child comes forth a gun with eyes;

but from every crime bullets are born
that will some day find the spot

of the heart.

You will ask why does not his verse

sing of sleep, of leaves,

of the mighty volcanoes of his native land?

Come and see the blood in the streets.

Come and see

the blood in the streets

come and see the blood

in the streets!

II

THE WAY IT WAS WITH SPAIN

Dry and taut, Spain, by day
a drum of muffled sound,
level plain and eagle nest, stillness
and sudden squalls.

How I love (love to the tears, to the core of my soul)
love your hard soil, your impoverished bread,
your poverty-stricken people, how in the depths
of my being nestles the unheeded blossom of your hamlets
wrinkled, immobile and by time forgotten
and your landscape of metal
spread in the moonlight and in time
and devoured by an empty God.
Your whole structure, your animal-like
aloneness, together with your intelligence
surrounded by the stony abstraction of silence,
your tangy wine, your soft
wine, your violent
and delicate vineyards.

Solar rock, pure among the regions
of the world, Spain streaked by bloods
and metals, clear and victorious
proletarian of petals and bullets, only one
alive and dreamy and sonorous.

TRANSLATED BY CARLOS BUHLER

The Playwright as Playwright

by Barbara Deming



IN HIS latest book, *The Playwright as Thinker*, Mr. Eric Bentley proposes to teach us how to read the works of the great playwrights. "Any good work of art can bear the closest scrutiny. The better, the closer," he contends. And he is of course very right. "In recent years," he urges, "we have been learning to read lyrics more accurately, more richly, and with more attention to structure. We need to learn to read plays well, too."

We do need to learn to read plays. It is all too obvious, for example, that our drama critics, if they spend any time alone with the great scripts, spend that time helplessly. This is witnessed by the fact that if they find anything amiss in some production of a Chekov, of a Shakespeare play, they can be counted on to put the major blame on Mr. Chekov, on Mr. Shakespeare (though they might hazard a safer guess, one would think, as to who were the more fallible parties involved).

But though our need is great, Mr. Bentley, I am afraid, cannot help us. He is not the one to draw our attention to a play's underlying structure, because in the last analysis he does not really know what the nature of a play is.

One is led to suspect this in the very foreword to his book. "Playwrights must have a self to express," he writes—adding that our commercial playwrights are "as nearly as possible nobody"; and he goes on to define the intent of his book as the intent to seek out "the real identity of our imaginative modern playwrights." It is obviously true that a "nobody" can't write a great play. It is equally true, however, that if a playwright does no more than exhibit for us his unique identity, if he does not in a very special sense

put himself *outside* himself as he writes, then he is not master of the dramatic medium. The concept of a play as above all a work of self-expression is an inadequate concept, and it leads Mr. Bentley into confusion.

Watch him lose his way, for example, in an attempt at historical criticism. ("What do they know of drama who only drama know?" he has declared flamboyantly—"Drama is . . . only a portion of a complex historical whole.") He is evaluating Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata*. The religious ending is false, he tells us—"His religion is always pasted on." But, he continues (now watch him), *this very fact* is what makes Strindberg's plays better than other religious plays of the time, for he "represents the modern would-be religionist much more explicitly when he so patently fails in simple, positive faith." Before our eyes Mr. Bentley's judgement hopelessly blurs. And that it does so follows all too naturally from his basic premise about the drama. For here he finds indeed successful self-expression: Strindberg has been "honest even to the point of revealing his own dishonesty." It is a brand of dishonesty common to the age in which he lives. And so, he concludes, the play must be a good play, and a play of real dimension. He is of course here blindly confusing the work of art and the striking symptom. It may indeed be a mark of the great playwright that he reveals to us "the deepest conflicts in the life of the time"—but not by exhibiting himself to us as a foremost victim.

I submit that the most illuminating text on the mark of the good playwright, on the essential nature of a good play, remains to date Aristotle's *Poetics*, and I am bold to recommend that Mr. Bentley re-read it carefully. (He has of course read it, and indeed even quotes it—but I recommend that he re-read it.)

Here is the crux of Aristotle's definition of a play: it is "an imitation, not of men, but of an action, and of life." Mr. Bentley should note first that he speaks in terms not of self-expression but of an imitation of something outside oneself. Aristotle uses the word "action" of course in no superficial sense. He specifies character as subsidiary to "dramatic action"; and "character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man

chooses or avoids." The "dramatic action" which a play exhibits to us will be, then, some particular movement towards an object of moral choice. That choice may of course be subconscious. And "moral" subsumes "immoral."

Apropos then of historical perspectives, a good playwright will illuminate the age in which he is born by exhibiting for us some action which lies at the heart of that age; by exhibiting something about what people under those conditions of life typically "choose or avoid"; something, in short, of the *ethos* of the time. He will reveal also what he senses to be the peculiar destiny of such an action under the prevailing conditions of life. A play is "an imitation . . . of an action, *and of life*" (italics mine).

It is in terms of this central action, and of the destiny it suffers, that the unity of a good play is to be sought. The action must be "complete and whole." Let Mr. Bentley note that *he* would seek the unity of a play in quite other terms—his definition of a play being not "an imitation . . . of an action, and of life" but, rather, an exhibition of the playwright as thinker. It is not entirely appropriate to pin him down, because he is not always consistent, and one of his chief talents is the talent to avoid committing himself—though his pose is that of the daring young man, the hard-hitter. But generally speaking the definition holds: when he speaks of the "dialectical steel frame" of some great play, he does not refer to the progressive unfolding of a "dramatic action," but rather to the progressive unfolding of the playwright's views on life.

His epigrams upon the distinction between tragedy and comedy are all too consistent here. He distinguishes them in terms of "two opposing schemes of life, the one religious, or quasi-religious, postulating an ultimate meaning in life, the other secular and ethical, postulating an immediate moral meaning in life . . . Tragedy has always suggested ideas concerning the significance of human life. Comedy has suggested ideas of right and wrong conduct." The dichotomies to which he resorts here are quite meaningless, but his real error is in positing an entirely different philosophy to the writer of the one genre or the other—instead of distinguishing between the kind of human experience chosen in either instance to

write about. What, we may ask, of the man who writes both tragedies and comedies? Must he, to do so, shift *Weltanschauung*?

None of this is to imply that the playwright's distinctive view of the world is not to be deduced from his work (nor that it is an improper object of study). But it is not in terms of it that the unity of a play, and its basic structure, is to be sought. And, what is more, it may be introduced in ways that are appropriate or in ways that are altogether inappropriate to the dramatic medium.

It is a sorry comment upon Bentley that though one may posit his definition of a play as we have done, though *The Playwright as Thinker* is the very title he chooses for his book, he never in all its pages attempts a definitive statement as to the sense in which thinking should be introduced in a play. If one patches together his random remarks on the subject, the resulting picture is not harmonious. He remarks of Schiller, for example, that he "was more of a thinker than Shakespeare." And here is what he means by "thinker" in this instance: "Whereas (Shakespeare) presents things, Schiller writes *about* things." Though, characteristically, he doesn't on this page pass any judgement, more than twenty pages later he says that Schiller "for all his eloquence and intellect . . . is never entirely great as a playwright; his genius is . . . more forensic than dramatic." A note of ambiguity is introduced by the phrase "for all his . . . intellect," yet here the term "thinker" and the term "forensic" would seem to be identified, and together established as something foreign to the "dramatic." When Bentley comes to discuss the distinctive nature of modern drama, however, the term "thinker" is in favor again, and is applied in a manner that just as definitely associates it with the forensic: "In a broader sense the playwright has always been a thinker," he says, but since Hebbel, since Ibsen, he has tended to be a thinker in an added sense. "'The stage as tribunal' is particularly characteristic of the modern stage." "Shakespeare did not have to choose between the medieval and the Renaissance ideas. His work *reflects* the conflict between them . . . The modern playwright regards the conflict [of ideas in his time] as a challenge. Which side shall he take?" For, says Bentley, the conflict of ideas is the *basic* conflict proper to mod-

ern drama—such a drama being peculiarly appropriate to “a world without a common faith, philosophy, or idea.”

The attempt to define the underlying structure of a play in terms of a “basic conflict” is, by the way, a very common one—but, I submit, unrewarding. The element of conflict is, to be sure, never absent from drama. If one thinks of a play in terms of a central action playing itself out, that action will, like any action in life, inevitably encounter obstacles. But it may well be an oversimplification to speak of some one conflict as *the* conflict. The great playwrights are inclined to be more subtle than this. One can define the basic conflict, of course, in very abstract terms, terms that have no immediate relation to a central action. And this is what is usually done. It is, in short, all too compatible with the concept of a play as the progressive revelation of the playwright as a thinker (a concept which I do not, of course, mean to imply is the unique creation of Eric Bentley).

As for the propriety of the modern playwright’s “taking sides,” now that the world he looks out on is without a common faith, I submit that it is proper for him in no further sense than that in which it has always been proper—which is to say in a very special sense indeed. I submit that it is proper to introduce “the element of thought” in no sense other than that described by Aristotle in the 4th century B. C.

Here is how Aristotle describes that element in a good play: “the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances.” Bentley, to be sure, quotes Henry Becque that “the serious thing about drama is not the ideas. It is the absorption of the ideas by the characters.” But whereas this covers the first of Aristotle’s specifications, it does not cover the second. By Aristotle’s definition, it is not enough to have words spoken “in character,” not enough to put them in the mouths of types who look as though they might possibly say such things. The words spoken must also be pertinent to the action in which the characters are involved—and in terms of which the unity of the play is to be found. They must be pertinent to the particular stage of life that action has reached.

Aristotle's definition sets very real restrictions on the fashion in which a playwright may introduce his own perspective on life. They are restrictions which all too few playwrights are inclined, or able, to respect. And they are restrictions which Bentley is not at all inclined to exact. (They are by no means respected by all those playwrights whom he would list among the great.)

But the definition also opens very lively possibilities. That these possibilities are in turn hardly dreamed of by Mr. Bentley, is evidenced in such a statement as the following: "In *Tristan* time and fate seem in a transcendental sense to be conquered, as in *Antony and Cleopatra*, by the grandeur of a high and sacrificial passion." The characters in both dramas may properly enough be said to *attempt* to conquer time and fate. But how they *seem to succeed*—the perspective we are given on their attempt—is a very different matter in the two cases.

In *Tristan* the element of thought is introduced very meagrely. There is the minimum of perspective on what goes on. Contrary to Mr. Bentley's claims that the effect of song is one of "quotation and distance," making identification with the protagonists next to impossible, I should say that one is impelled to identify with the characters in *Tristan* more blindly than in almost any drama extant—quite wrapped round and mutely swept along by their passions. One may if one wishes resist, sit back, and just let the whole thing go by one—refuse to participate at all. But within the bounds of the opera itself one will find no perspective. For Wagner has let himself be seduced by the very emotions that seduce the characters.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, on the contrary, we are given the subtlest and most varied perspectives. To begin with, the characters themselves are more complex, operate at a more conscious level. The action to which they are all committed, in one sense or another, is an irrational action—which does have something to do with trying to transcend the limitations of the merely mortal (and thereby "punish" Fortune). Most of the characters, with one part of their brain, sense rather sharply the impossibility of what they attempt; and this eye on what they do, in itself, establishes per-

spective. But Shakespeare affords us a deeper look at what goes on than is possessed by any of the characters. He juxtaposes the vision of one character to that of another, so as to open for us new vistas, as it were behind the two. Or he introduces a turn of event in such a way as to bring the utterance of a character into new focus for us. Antony, in Cleopatra's arms, declares if she would reckon the proportions of his love, she needs must "find out *new heaven, new earth*" (ital. mine). An attendant interrupts with, "News, my good lord, from *Rome*."—that all too definite spot on the globe where he has left things undone. Antony raves of punishing Fortune, "seeming to bear it lightly," as his followers with a certain difficulty heave his wounded bulk aloft to the window of Cleopatra's monument. Such ironies are multifold.

Shakespeare's point of view cannot be reduced to that of his characters; and yet every perspective that he effects, he effects in terms of things he has them say—possible for them to say, being who they are, and pertinent to a central action to which he shows them each in his own way committed; pertinent to the destiny that action has up to that point suffered. Bentley would have the modern dramatist employ the intellect in a new sense. The unfolding of an action typical of a society "without a common faith, philosophy, or idea" will certainly result in the introduction of perspectives unknown to earlier drama. But it is still the proper task of the playwright to accomplish this within the limitations described in the *Poetics*.

Perhaps one reason Bentley is so disinclined to exact these limitations, and blind to the possibilities within them, is that the phenomenon of George Bernard Shaw dazzles him. Shaw is Bentley's undoing, because he is convinced that Shaw is not merely a great wit—a "poet of polemics"—but one of the great playwrights, and as a playwright Shaw supports every one of his misconceptions about the drama. The unity of a Shaw play *can* be found in terms of G. B. Shaw as a thinker, in terms of G. B. Shaw as a unique identity. It can be found in no other terms *but* these. Bentley chides William Archer for calling Shaw "an imperfect ventriloquist," but I would term this one of Mr. Archer's more knowing

remarks. Shaw does put words in the mouths of characters who might, according to type, say such things. But he does not put words in their mouths pertinent to the unfolding of any central action to which he shows them committed. So in the end they have no life apart from him. The only live character is Shaw himself. The central event of a Shaw play can be properly termed an encounter between Shaw and the audience—an encounter, of course, in which Shaw utterly triumphs.

Bentley himself makes many accurate observations about the Shavian technique, but his description always blurs, because of his determination to prove it a dramatic technique. Here he is on *Candida*: Audiences of that time, he says, confronted by a play in which a young man falls in love with a married woman, would automatically expect that play to accord either with the current Dumas fils formula, in which the husband is a tyrant or bore, and bourgeois marriage is debunked, or the Augier formula, in which the lover is a fool or scoundrel, and bourgeois marriage is vindicated. Shaw, he says, juggles with these preconceptions skilfully, leading the audience to think at one moment that it is being given the one formula, but at the next moment that it is being given the other. He shows all the truth there is in both, he says, and then in the end “surpasses both . . . not . . . with a new formula . . . (but) by the allroundedness of his vision.” For “if Shaw has on occasion praised partisanship,” Bentley concludes, “he has also said: ‘My plays have only one subject: life; and only one attitude: interest in life.’” “*Candida* is evidence for this claim.”

I would heartily disagree with this picture of Shaw declining the argument. I would say that in *Candida* he seeks to debunk bourgeois marriage, and I would say that the curtain falls as he puts in his last word. Bentley is correct enough in saying that we have not here the Dumas fils play, for Shaw does decline to argue in any face to face manner, with solemn plea that his opinion be accepted. Shaw enjoys best an argument that is a bit over his opponent's head; likes the special triumph of ending the argument without his opponent's knowing that he has been beaten; likes to carry off into the Shavian night as a delectable secret the knowl-

edge of his unique superiority. Bentley quotes a relevant letter, in which Shaw gleefully remarks that he should surely be lynched by infuriated *Candida*-maniacs if the real meaning of *Candida* were known.

Bentley certainly starts out discussing the play in terms of a duel between Shaw and the audience, but then at a certain point he begins to insist that what is unfolded in *Candida* is not that but rather a bit of life, the destiny of two men who are cured of their illusions about a woman. I submit that if Shaw were really concerned with exhibiting to us in clear light what these three characters wanted from each other, and what became of them, trying to get it, that this play would be a very nasty play—particularly at the finale. Bentley himself remarks (and quotes Shaw to the same effect) that what *Candida* wants from the two men is not very nice. *But*, Bentley comments, “(*Candida*’s) charm is so great that no audience would wish to look behind it. Her mastery of people seems so sure that we are not inclined to pry into its nature and motivation.” I find his comment all too apt; and I would ask Mr. Bentley whether one can say of a work that it is in the dramatic mode, when its author quite knowingly discourages an audience from looking into the motivation of the characters.

Bentley comments—as it were in answer to this—that the sweetness *Candida* pours over the whole play is not a suspect sweetness, but genuine; the point being that Shaw is not simple-minded enough to paint her “simply a bad woman”; people in life are not all bad. But the charge against Shaw is not that he fails to sit in final judgement upon the person of *Candida*. It is relevant to quote again Aristotle’s definition of a play. It is “an imitation, *not of men*, but of an action, and of life”—an exhibition not of the total personalities of various characters, but of some particular action to which these characters have committed themselves (though such a commitment may indeed involve them deeply.) It is the playwright’s role to pass dramatic judgement on this action—to set it in a moral perspective. This judgement need hardly be of a simple sort. *Antony and Cleopatra* exhibits an action as glamorous, as magnificent, but as irrational, nevertheless, and so

in the end comical, and childish, too—and by its nature doomed.

If Bentley goes astray in his analysis of Shaw because he tries too hard to prove that “the Shavian mode is drama,” he frequently goes astray in his analyses of those who *do* work in the dramatic mode, because he would read them as though they were Shaw. He even tries to describe Chekov in terms of the Shavian game with the audience. He talks very little of Chekov. (I parenthetically raise an eyebrow at his boasted perspective. He twits Archer for championing Pinero along with Ibsen—and himself harps for pages on Bertolt Brecht, devotes some passing sentences to Chekov.) But here is what he has to say of Chekov, just in passing: Chekov “pretend(s) to be an extreme Naturalist.” “The purpose of (his) pretense . . . resembles the purpose of Ibsen’s pretenses: Chekov wishes to establish an ironic relation, a tension, between the surface and the substratum of his art.” Here is a far-fetched and inappropriate way to describe the fact that in a good play there are levels of meaning beyond the literal.

Bentley’s other major comment upon Chekov is that his one weakness is wistfulness. Here he fails, as usual, to distinguish between the playwright and his characters—misses the point that Chekov is exhibiting to us actions (typical of the world he knew) that *lead* to wistfulness, leave the characters nowhere.

It is failure to distinguish between the playwright and his characters, of course, that keeps Bentley from seeking dramatic irony ever in any terms but those of the playwright’s playing Shavian games with the audience. It leads him too to see the characters of great plays not as people at all but as static *concepts*, impossible for any actor to bring to life. Thus Hilda in Ibsen’s *The Master Builder* becomes the embodiment of the Id; the villagers in Pirandello’s *Right You Are If You Think You Are* become “unreal busybodies.” The only comment we need make in the latter instance is to underline the word “unreal.” Discussing Pirandello, Bentley comes up with the statement: “life, being fluid, is inevitably misrepresented by art.” Let this statement, too, stand as comment, not upon works of art, but upon Mr. Bentley’s readings of them.

In his analysis of *The Master Builder*, Bentley at a certain point shifts his attack, and from talking about it in terms of some mental game of Ibsen's—"dialectical" interaction of "base and superstructure"—begins to talk about it in terms of a revelation of Ibsen's personal life. He identifies the master builder with the ageing playwright "who wonders . . . if in appointing himself preceptor of mankind he has not built higher than he himself can stand. Cowardice or avoidance," he goes on, "was Ibsen's . . . besetting fear, as we first see at the time when he declined to fight in the war against Bismarck in 1864. The fear is projected into *The Master Builder*, split into many colors like a spectrum; and the result is a symbolic drama that is . . . by no means to be dismissed as mysticism." Not to be dismissed as mysticism, indeed. Here is a wonderful example of the degree to which Bentley's concept of a play as the expression of the playwright's mind and self can lead him to miss the proper life of the play—to give it not that accurate and rich reading promised in his foreword, but a reading far-fetched and meagre. The main figure of this play is a successful career man—the master builder. The action of the play has something to do with the attempt, on the part of all, to escape dispossession by this figure. The attempt, one full of excitement and challenge for a character like Hilda, does indeed for others involve the element of fear—does in the case of the master builder's aged assistant, does in the case of the master builder himself, who cannot rest there at the top but must, if he would not lose his title, keep on forever climbing. But this action has rather more relation to the world outside him which Ibsen was observing than to any personal traumas suffered in connection with his work or with the war against Bismarck.

In his analyses of larger trends as in his analyses of individual plays, Bentley fails to come to very real grips with the specific. The book is outlined as a whole in terms of "the two traditions of modern drama"—naturalism and anti-naturalism. Bentley puts on a good show with these two words, but if one looks closely the show turns out to be really about nothing at all—a sleight-of-hand performance. In chapter 1 he writes: "An increasing closeness to

objective facts; special techniques for their reproduction; an empiricist outlook—these are naturalism.” Then in chapter 4 he comes out with the statement that Wagner, the great man of the anti-naturalist tradition is really at heart a crude naturalist; Ibsen, the great man of the naturalist tradition, really at heart a Romanticist—a bit of show accomplished by shifting the meaning of his terms in mid-air, using “naturalism” first in accordance with his original definition, then immediately after in quite another sense, to mean a lack of principles. In chapter 8 he makes the impressive statement that Strindberg handed on the two traditions, renewed, to the twentieth century—a statement more impressive than specific, as he has just, in another bit of jugglery, stretched the term “anti-naturalism” to cover virtually everything in the entire history of drama not covered by “naturalism.” His final coup is the announcement, in chapter 9, that the two traditions may be on the point of blending. He has started out in chapter 1 by admitting that neither could possibly exist in a pure state, and so this bit of showmanship too leaves us gaping a little perhaps but not very enlightened.

Stark Young, reviewing the book in *The New Republic*, wonders why Bentley pauses so often to demolish nonsensical opinions. I hazard the answer that he does so not out of the patience and sense of social responsibility Stark Young tentatively suggests, but out of very real necessity. It is his only means of proceeding. (Where he finds no such straw men in his path, he constructs his own. What else to him are such concepts as naturalism and anti-naturalism—concepts which he is then able magically to transcend?) And Mr. Bentley is, in the end, victim of his straw men. From each brilliant encounter he carries away a touch of contamination, because he has started out on his crusade with too little of his own.

We do stand in need of a richer approach to the great plays. But the fact that Eric Bentley is hailed by many as the man to teach us, is only proof again, I am afraid, of our extremity.

A Spot of Leave

by Olivia Manning



AT FIVE o'clock, when the afternoon was deepening into violet-scented, spring twilight, Phillips and Aphrodite met for tea at Zona's. This was the hour when the Alexandrine Greeks drank coffee. Some, men dropping into the café from offices and women pausing in their shopping, would stand at the counter and eat with a silver, two-pronged fork, a couple of cakes. The cakes were rich and elaborate—sponge-cake, macaroon or feather-fine pastry laden with cream, strawberries, chocolate, icing, nuts, preserved fruits, rich jams or chestnut paste. They were displayed behind glass.

"And the ladies," thought Phillips in his captain's uniform, his young face matured by a cavalry moustache he would have shrunk from wearing when a civilian clerk, "the ladies are like the cakes."

They came and went in the shop, charming in their flowered silks, their furs, their confectionery hats, their sheer silk stockings from the United States, and their delicate shoes. Each whose husband was of the necessary income level wore like a trophy on her ring finger a diamond of at least two carats. All were completed with flowers and perfumes as though a fashionable wedding might be sprung on them at any moment. Phillips, staring at them with his slightly bulging, stone-blue eyes, nodded agreement with himself: "Just like the cakes—and I wouldn't mind a bite."

"It is shocking, don't you think, such a display?" said Aphrodite.

"Shocking?" Phillips turned to her and laughed, "Far from it."

"But in Palestine you lack sugar?"

"Well, the civilians are a bit short."

"Here they have too much, yet they refuse to export. In this window last week there was a wedding cake—eight cakes on top of one another, white with sugar. And in Palestine children are ill for need of it."

"Too bad," agreed Phillips, looking back into the shop's bustle and fluffing up his moustache with his hand as dark eyes glanced towards him. He had admired Aphrodite's English every time he had been at a loss for something to say, but his ear was more intrigued by the chirruping, inaccurate French of the ladies who moved among the big violet, lime-green and pink bows on the display chocolate boxes like flowers among butterflies. The men were as elegant. Phillips noticed one—small, elderly, plump, exquisite in silver-grey with pointed shoes—who followed a shop girl and supervised her packing of a satin-covered box. He moved like a bright insect through the garden of bows and women, pausing his long, quivering fore-finger over the sweet trays, dipping it like a sting when he made his choice, then rejecting and choosing again, making, unmaking and remaking his mind with agitation.

"Wonder who the old boy's buying those for," said Phillips.

"For himself."

"Surely not."

"Yes," Aphrodite gave a decided shake of her head, "He is a relative of mine. He is very rich. He always buys himself a box when he makes money on the Bourse. Every day he makes more money except when it looks as though the war might end soon, then the Bourse is frightened."

"Really!" After some reflection Phillips said: "You have a lot of relatives."

"Everyone has a lot of relatives," said Aphrodite.

Beyond the giant bottles filled with crystallised fruits, violets and angelica in the shop window, went a stream of people—smart Greeks, rich Egyptians, servants in galabiahs and fezzs, French sailors with red pom-poms on their hats and every sort of English and Allied service man.

Some French officers from the pale grey battleships that had

lain motionless in Alexandria harbour since the fall of France, sat at the nearby table. They drank coffee like the Greeks. They, thought Aphrodite, had become at home here because they had adapted themselves at once. The English saw to it that a place adapted itself to them. Phillips, for instance, had settled into his basket-chair and without consulting her had at once ordered tea. He had got it just as he had wanted it—hot and strong with milk and sugar. Zona's had learnt to serve it that way the day the first Englishman explained his needs. The Wrens, Aunts and nurses, when they arrived, had proved more exacting, for they required the old tea to be emptied out of the pots and fresh tea put in for each customer—but they, too, got what they wanted. They sat round the tables with the exact look of the girls she had seen in tea-shops when she went to stay with her husband's family at Littlehampton.

"You like the tea here?" she asked Phillips.

"Just the job," he answered, "Laid on as mother made it."

"Your nurses," said Aphrodite, watching the table opposite, "They do not approve of us, do they? They have seen men dying and they think here are all these people who only make money out of the war."

"They're jealous," declared Phillips, "They know you've got nice silk stockings and they've only got cotton ones. You have got nice silk stockings, haven't you?" He gazed humorously under the table, "That's what we like to see when we get a spot of leave."

"Don't women wear silk stockings in Jerusalem?"

"Well, yes, they do if they can get them—but I used to be up in the blue, you know. I can remember what a treat it was to see you girls nicely dressed—and it's still a treat. I'm glad your husband doesn't take too dim a shufti of me trotting you round a bit."

"Why should he?" asked Aphrodite, "He's an Englishman."

"Even Englishmen can be jealous."

"We are modern," said Aphrodite as though the suggestion of jealousy were an insult. She thought back to a few years before when, unmarried, she had the reputation of being the most "mod-

ern" girl in Alexandria. Indeed, so "modern" had her behaviour been that it had led to endless uproars at home and her mother had said: "You will never get a husband now, there is not a Greek of good family who would have you."

"Then I'll marry an Englishman," she had said. And she did.

"My parents did not like me to marry James. He was only a clerk in the English bank—but I loved him. I love Englishmen. They are so intelligent, so broad of mind, so 'modern'—the Greeks are like Orientals. In England women are free."

"Well, I suppose they are," said Phillips uncertainly, "But, of course, nice girls . . ."

"My parents wanted me to marry a rich cotton merchant. An old man who was always drunk. A Copt, too! Think of it! 'You can reform him,' my mother said, but I said 'Why should I? If he wants to be drunk all the time—it is of no interest to me.' Then James was sent to work in Cairo and they were glad. I said nothing. I pretended I had forgotten him. Then one day I started to cry with a tooth-ache. 'What I suffer,' I said, 'Oh, what I suffer!' They were alarmed and said I must go to our dentist in Cairo. So I went and he made an X-ray of my teeth and one had twisted roots. 'Look, mother,' I said, 'look at my insides—how terrible.' So they agreed I should go to stay with my aunt in Cairo and have my teeth mended. When I was two days in Cairo I got married to James."

"Good Lord!" commented Phillips, "what did the pater say?"

"You mean my father? He said much, but in the end it is all right. He is a banker. He used influence and James was brought back here to a good position."

"O. K. for James, eh?"

"We are very happy."

"Oh, are you!" Phillips showed a twinge of annoyance that made Aphrodite smile.

She was reminded of the days before her happy marriage when she had roused endless twinges of jealousy in the young men of Alexandria. Now, after two years of contentment with James, she felt afresh the glow of the chase. In a moment the situation,

which she had scarcely grasped before, fell into position and she saw herself in control. Looking upon Phillips as her natural victim, Aphrodite's eyes and colour grew brighter and her whole manner eased into an indolent charm: "Tell me about your home in England," she said, as she pushed back her tea-cup and lit a cigarette.

"Oh!" Phillips was disconcerted for a moment but he was not unprepared. Ever since he had got through the Octu and his office experience had led him to a job at Pal Base, he had been readjusting and colouring his background.

Aphrodite, watching him as she listened to him, saw him quite newly as rather handsome in his youthful, blue-eyed fairness. His moustache hid his worst feature, his small, prim mouth. She began to build up from what was attractive in him, the elements of romance. She knew exactly how it should continue from here and she realised she was ready to go through with it. She listened with all the necessary smiling interest, the glow, the flattering absorption in him that was to be his undoing. When Phillips, looking up into her fixed, dark glance, blushed slightly, she thought: "He is sweet, and only a boy."

"What is your mother like?" she asked, keeping him talking.

"Rather handsome, the mater. Dresses awfully well, but a bit severe with the poor old pater. Plays golf, too," he added the last touch as the picture came into focus.

"Have you a photograph of her?" asked Aphrodite.

"Yes . . . I mean, no. Not with me," Phillips blushed again.

After a smiling pause Aphrodite said: "My husband is going out after dinner. Come in for drink and keep me company."

"'Fraid I can't. I've got a date with another fellow on leave from my office."

She looked surprised rather than hurt, but smiled: "I hope you're not going to Maisie's House."

He gave her a startled stare. There was a long silence before he suggested they should meet next day for tea.

"Of course," said Aphrodite, "And would you like to walk with me along the Corniche?"

"I don't mind." Phillips' manner was neither enthusiastic nor unenthusiastic. Aphrodite could interpret it as she wished.

When he had seen her to a taxi, he called one for himself and started back to his hotel by the sea. Settled into his corner, watching out at the brilliance of the street in that moment before complete darkness and the black-out fell, he contemplated his life now lived in expensive hotels, expensive restaurants, taking tea with the daughters of wealthy bankers, jumping into taxis . . . and he murmured to himself in the almost forgotten argot of the desert: "Bit of all right, eh, chum?"

Aphrodite's flat in the Sharia Cherif Pasha was as English as its basic Frenchness permitted. Her father had also presented her with a small house at Stanley Bay where she and James spent the summer. She had, she realised, all she could wish. James had the characteristics she most admired in the English. He was better looking than Phillips, he was considerate yet met her on an equal footing and showed no resentment of her intelligence. She could not had she wished have found cause for discontent, yet now she felt she was missing an excitement she must find again.

At dinner, she said to James: "You know Phillips, the young officer?"

"What about him?"

"You wouldn't mind, would you, if I went to bed with him?"

James did not glance up from his soup. He said: "I'm tired and I've got to go out to that damned meeting."

"You wouldn't mind, would you?"

"Mind what?" asked James irritably.

"What I asked—if I slept with Phillips?"

"I don't know," James kept his glance on his plate, "I haven't thought about it."

"But we thought about it a long time ago. We agreed we'd be modern."

"Then why ask me? You know you can do what you like."

Aphrodite sighed. She wanted to get these formalities over. Almost she wished now the whole business were done with and

Phillips safely back in Jerusalem. Yet she was determined to go through with it and in her determination she felt a little drunk, a little lifted above the realities of her everyday life: "I don't want to deceive you," she said, "I want you to be happy about it."

"All right," said James, "I'm happy. Now shut up."

When he went out, Aphrodite moved restlessly about the flat. She remained in a state of restless inactivity next day until it was time to meet Phillips. James did not speak at breakfast or at luncheon. Phillips, she knew, had only three days more leave and the knowledge filled her with a sense of urgency so that she ached with nervous strain. She ordered the house from habit and she was conscious of James with a worried impatience that was painful to her. What she felt for him was, she knew, intact—but it must remain at a standstill while she lived through this interlude that would prove to her that she was missing nothing.

After luncheon she left the house before James. "I may not be back for dinner," she said. He did not reply.

She met Phillips in a café near the old harbour. It was a brilliant spring day and the sea had in it the first green and purple that would deepen with summer. On the other side of the circular harbour was the castle. It stood, on the site of the ancient Pharos, cleanly edged against the sea's colour as though blown bone-white by the wind. The water within the harbour arms sprang up and down.

As they followed the Corniche road with the wind in their faces, Phillips said: "I've been thinking of having a couple of days in Cairo."

"You mean, after your leave?"

"No, I'd have to go tomorrow."

"Alone?" asked Aphrodite.

"Well, the chap from my office is going. I thought of going with him."

Aphrodite, silent, stared blankly ahead.

"But I don't think I'll go. I like it here."

"Ah!" Aphrodite smiled. "Perhaps you do not want to leave me?"

Phillips cleared his throat as though he were doing a comic turn and gave her a coy glance: "That's about it," he said.

Conversation became easier after that. On one side of them the concrete houses and blocks of flats stretched far out of sight into the desert. On the other side splashed the mildly choppy sea, its border of rock yellow and porous like rotting cheese.

"It reminds me of Worthing," said Phillips. "The only thing is we don't have date palms."

"I know. I've been to Littlehampton."

"Good Lord, have you?" and they talked about England and English sea-side towns. Aphrodite was gaily critical while Phillips was nostalgically respectful. They passed Stanley Bay with its closed bathing huts and air of popular entertainment, now shut up for the winter. The houses still stretched on. In the distance, too far away to be reached, appeared a palace among palms, the only Oriental thing in sight. They came at last to a thin shelf of rock through which the ancients had cut holes. On a gusty day such as this the sea came leaping through them in spouts.

"There!" said Aphrodite, "Isn't that interesting? In the old days people used to fix musical instruments in the holes so the sea could play tunes."

"Why on earth did they do that?"

"For amusement."

"Rum idea."

"But isn't it interesting? I brought you to see it."

"Did you? Hell of a length this Corniche—as you call it. Better go back now," and he swung round without waiting for her agreement. Now the wind was behind them, blowing their hair forward. Right at the other end of the great curve of the Corniche road, the main part of the town, growing steely blue as the light failed, was neatly built up on a bulge of land. A few barrage balloons were beginning to rise like silver kidneys on threads above the harbour. The wind was growing cold.

"How about a taxi?" said Phillips at Stanley Bay. When they found one and settled inside it, Aphrodite placed herself com-

fortably against his shoulder. Some minutes passed before he thought to slip an arm round her.

"Now to brew up," he said with satisfaction.

"What does that mean?"

"Tea, of course. Where shall we go?"

"The same place," Aphrodite whispered warmly, "The same table."

"O. K.," said Phillips, and: "We're in luck," as they entered the café and saw their table was free.

When the tea was poured out, when they were pressing their forks through the luscious softness of coffee cream cakes, Aphrodite felt the moment had come to clarify and speed up the situation. Phillips might have an Englishman's shyness, but he had only three days more leave.

"I spoke to my husband about you," she said.

"What did you tell him? Something nice?"

"Of course. I told him I wanted to sleep with you."

Phillips raised his eyes and fixed them on her. Even then he had little expression but he blushed more darkly than he had done for years. "Good Lord!" he dropped his glance, "What made you tell him that?"

"Because I didn't want to deceive him. He must know."

Phillips put a lump of cake into his mouth and let it dissolve slowly. There was a long pause before he mumbled: "But there isn't anything for him to know."

Aphrodite heard because she had been listening. "You mean you don't want to?"

Phillips swallowed down the last of his cake and pulled himself together. His manner became rather aggressive: "You ought to know better," he said, "A married lady! And you said you were happy."

"What difference does that make?"

He refused to reply. She drank some tea. There was another pause before she said with a nervous giggle: "Why don't you want to?"

"Hell, let's drop the subject." Phillips looked indignant and

his voice had lost much of its gentility. A hard and edgy silence settled on them. Aphrodite tried once or twice to break it with an anecdote about this person or that passing through the café but Phillips was unresponsive. When they parted his manner was still cold. He did not suggest their meeting again.

James, supposing Aphrodite would be out, came home late that evening. He found her sitting alone in darkness. As he switched on the light, he said: "Home early. Did the beautiful romance fall through?"

She did not answer. She was lying back against her chair and sobbing. He stared at her for some moments, then went to her and slid his arm round her. "What is the matter?" he asked.

She pressed her face against his middle: "He didn't want me. Now I know I'm getting old."

"Nonsense," he said, "It just showed what a fool he was."

"No. I know. I know I'm getting old."

Truth of History — History of Truth

A COMMENT ON

GEORGE SANTAYANA'S *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*

by Stanley Dell



THE PUBLICATION last Spring of George Santayana's *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels* marked the passage of half a century in a rich and varied literary life. As Santayana's works have been preserved in the definitive Triton edition (Scribners), and his systematic writings have been discussed by various critics in *The Library of Living Philosophers* (Vol. 2), one might be inclined to regard this latest book as an excursus of the mind after the long day's work. But it is actually, I believe, a continuation of that labor, and evidence of its single-mindedness.

We may take up an essay under such a title with some misgivings—unless, indeed, we are wholly indifferent. We are familiar with the bell in the wooden steeple and the chimes in the Gothic spire; we remember that blood has been spilled in the Christian world. "The idea of Christ" somehow suggests the subjective vaporization of something that in the past has shown itself all too catastrophically embodied. On reading, however, this feeling is replaced by another. We find such warmth in Santayana's rendering of his subject that we are aware of exposing ourselves to the influence of a poetic and religious nature. He seeks to appreciate and to assimilate to his own thoughts and feelings, as a poet would, whatever he finds conveyed to him by the Evangelists. And we are struck by the absence of any inclination on his part to explain religious manifestations by surveying them from some other ground—that of anthropology, for instance. The Gospels are taken directly for what they are: the sources of one of the great

world religions—the one that has formed and permeated the culture to which Santayana avowedly belongs.

But emphasis of Santayana's poetic insight may be a commonplace that dismisses an important question. Everyone admits that he has this talent; what is crucial is the way in which it is compounded with the critical and speculative talents he also displays. He is by nature a moral philosopher, he has said; the study of man is his addiction—generic man who individually becomes the poet or scientist, the skeptic or believer, or something of all of these. His philosophy seeks to account for these propensities in human beings and to determine the conditions of their proper use and fulfillment.

One of his critics in the volume referred to, Baker Brownell, has written: "Because his interests are more in contexts than denotations, the general aspect of his philosophy seems to shift and change with each new internal emphasis . . . This sense for the context of things, or connotations, gives to his books an inner illumination that no other philosopher's possess. He can enter an idea or a philosophy and make it glow from within . . . From these contextual matrices, warm and plastic as they are, the universals that he is always using emerge."

I cannot find better words to describe Santayana's treatment of his materials in *The Idea of Christ*, though the passage quoted was written before the book. The contexts here are the parables and sayings of Jesus, the simple narrative themes portraying his earthly life, the symbolic expressions—like Son of God, Son of Man, the Messiah—pointing to his divine and human nature, and the cosmological perspectives that give the setting to his mission. Within these contexts, weighted as they are with Jewish hope and Greek speculation, Santayana unfolds a wealth of connotation, retracing at first the forms of Christian worship and belief—for the Fathers of the Church also went this way. But his universals do emerge; and he draws the threads of connotation from these dogmatic contexts by transposing them to the frame of his own naturalistic outlook. It is not without reason that he has subtitled his book *A Critical Essay*.

The universals that Santayana is always using are the terms Essence, Truth, Matter, Psyche and Spirit. I do not agree that in his use of them they shift and change; but they are surely, as he means them to be, indefinables—categories of reality intended to mark “the differences and relations between the animate and the inanimate, the physical and the moral, the psychological and the logical, the temporal and the eternal.” Take, for instance, his term Matter. Whatever it is shown to be by atomic research can only be another truth about it, for it is also what the biologist finds it to be. What perception, corrected in action, takes it for is also true; and its existence is posited by the inquiring mind as something prior to discovery. Belief in it is inevitable, since it is the object of animal faith; and since for knowledge it is inexhaustible, there is no reason for denying that it can do what it obviously does: organize itself into living bodies dynamically attuned to an organic world, and, growing sentient, produce human consciousness. While matter in flux is thus for Santayana the source of all existence and all activity, and consciousness the outcome of its highest complications, he is actually at the farthest remove from the materialism that seeks to couch all explanation in the terms of physical science.

“My whole description of the spiritual life,” Santayana has written, “is thus an extension of my materialism and a consequence of it.” In his ontology, the fruit is not explained by the tree. Whatever we know of the apple’s genesis will tell us nothing of its qualities and uses. Its qualities are directly given to our awareness as images or essences; and its uses are discovered by taking these as signs for the thing and signals for action. “For the realm of matter cannot admit mind into its progressive structure and movement; each trope or rhythm must be complete before sensation can arise; so that this sensation is intrinsically a result and not a cause, a comment and not an agent, an occurrence not physical but spiritual and moral.” Whatever sensation or feeling reports is “an ideal synthesis in the realm of truth,” even when sensation reports but an apple, and feeling reports it good. Mind or spirit is known by its reports only, whether internal to the mind,

or expressed in words or pictures. And every such report is about something having a proper status in some realm of being, though there may be error in ascription and partial illusion—itsself real enough. I am not here attempting to epitomize Santayana's thought. I wish only to point out how his naturalism grows into a philosophy that takes honorable pride in not explaining away anything, even myth.

Moreover, it is just in the attachment of consciousness to the psyche, as its seat and organ, that Santayana sees the poignancy of man's attempt to clarify his vision of himself, his world, and his place in it. By the psyche he means the organized life of the body, vegetative and propulsive, with its appetites, passions and outward tensions opening through sensibility to things not itself. When "impressions become signals and reports, and a sense develops for the whole field of action, in which movements and qualities begin to be discerned," consciousness arises. It thus has from the beginning "the whole world and all events for its virtual object." Awakening from vegetative sleep, the psyche becomes aware also of its pains, desires, joys and fears. Spirit is "consciousness of animal aspirations already afoot." But the intrinsic life of spirit resides in the further growth of consciousness in scope and intensity, when a divergence of psychic energy gives it a momentum of its own, and it is guided by "interest in fact, in form and in truth." If spirit is smothered and torn, it is by psychic forces that are the natural counterparts of the force that gives it life; and it is natural desires that spirit, grown arrogant, can torment.

It seems obvious that Santayana's thought here enters the field that is generally regarded as the domain of psychoanalysis. In *The Realm of Matter* Santayana treats of the psyche at length, and consistently in the feminine gender; a comparison of his description with Jung's idea of the anima, or with Freud's schema of the id, is unavoidable. *The Realm of Essence* has much to remind us of Jung's study of the transformations and symbolism of the libido; for Santayana says that "images, being generated in the living psyche, may be very apposite fulfillments to her previous experience or to her instinctive needs," and are "in their psychologi-

cal dimension a part of the actual." There is common ground, too, between Santayana's conception of essence, and Jung's conception of the archetypes: each is a modern revision of Plato's doctrine of ideas. These parallelisms surely represent a convergence of views about the structure and functions of the human mind, and are the more significant in that they cannot be ascribed to any similarity of approach. While Freud was laying the foundations of psychoanalysis by his studies of the morbid psyche, Santayana was clearing his thought of inherited notions in philosophy by a deliberate retreat to the minimum beliefs involved in the active moments of daily life and thought.

Santayana's theory of knowledge is grounded in the native and primitive voices of consciousness, and draws a basic distinction between "the cognitive intent, justified faith, and prompting to inquiry that are proper to knowledge," and "the pictures, emotions and ideal relations that are proper to the imagination." It is a distinction that divides in two the field of psychology, and that of history as well. Science is man's way of exploring the existent, and psychology follows the way of science when it charts the uniformities observable in man's physical nature and behavior. It is the intellect's prerogative to view what is not itself from the outside. But to capture the purport of intuition and thought not our own, we must draw upon our self-knowledge and practice the "art of imagining how a person feels." "The man beneath the psychologist must interpret the evidence by natural divination: he must become sympathetic." History, too, is science in so far as it fixes the order of events independently of their report in human memory. But it is "also, in most historians, an essay in dramatic art, since it pretends to rehearse the ideas and feelings of dead men. These would not be recoverable even if the historian limited himself to quoting their recorded words; . . . because even these words are hard to interpret afterwards, so as to recover the living sentiments they expressed."

Now, the study of Biblical texts as to their dates and authorship on the basis of style, language and internal evidence once bore the name of the Higher Criticism. It was reared upon massive re-

search in the fields of ancient history, comparative religion and philology. This immense literature records a long agony in the life of Protestantism—a violent effort on the part of truth-loving minds to be as honest in the light of science as Luther was supposed to have been in the light of faith. Most of the scholars were German theologians, and they passionately probed the historical foundations of the Gospels, of the doings and sayings of Jesus, and of Christian tradition—fervently hoping that God would prove them sound. It was not unbelief that prompted this search, but a desire to replace orthodox belief in Christ by the more personal and intimate bonds of understanding or sympathy. As an offshoot, this endeavor produced a succession of variously biased accounts or novelesque evocations of the supposed earthly life of a more or less divinely inspired human being—a succession in which the names of Strauss and Renan are the best known.

Santayana has, of course, availed himself of the knowledge amassed by the Higher Criticism. But he asserts at the very outset in *The Idea of Christ* that the Gospels “are not historical works but products of inspiration”—a term which he does not fling to the breeze, but discusses in his opening chapter. The would-be biographer of Jesus, he says, has wasted his labors “because he has mistaken the character of his texts.” And he asks us why we have not “laughed from the beginning at any rationalist or rationalizing ‘Life of Jesus,’ ” and discerned behind it “a substantial residue of trust in inspiration . . . or in the amiable figure of Jesus, conversing with his disciples or with Mary Magdalene or laying his hands on little children’s heads.” Yet, surely, this is no more than a gentle smile—no doubt in Renan’s direction. Albert Schweitzer, in his *Quest of the History of Jesus*, has dealt with Renan in a sardonic vein, paraphrasing his manner at length, and giving us a picture of Renan’s young rabbi followed by devoted women and riding from village to village on “his soft-gaited mule with long eyelashes.”

This book of Schweitzer’s, a digest and examination of New Testament research and its literary outgrowths, appeared in German in 1913 as an enlarged edition of an earlier work. It revives

for us the many projected figures of Jesus moving across the stage of "history": the liberal, the sentimental, the humanitarian, the proletarian, the Gallic or Teutonic Jesus. But Schweitzer does not merely rehearse the thoughts of his predecessors; he may rather be said to fight his way through them, for his style is polemic. Their criteria of historicity are subjected to his own critique; and he notes that his critics accuse him of defending a thesis of his own—a charge which he boldly accepts. His view, as I understand it, is that the historic person could only have been the "eschatological-apocalyptic" Jesus who announced the imminent end of the world, and who regarded his life as the prelude to the Last Judgment awaited by Messianic prophecy: not the ancient expectations vested in the House of David, but a contemporary upsurge of supra-mundane hope fed by the visions of Daniel and Enoch. His real teaching would have expressed this sense of fulfillment, and not the dawn of a new dispensation. He preached only to warn the elect to repent in time; and it is those of his sayings that ring the note of predestination that have been most faithfully transmitted.

The final outcome of this long quest, Schweitzer tells us, is therefore "negative," and its fate ironic. It set out to find the historical Jesus in order to bring him closer as teacher and saviour, and "it rejoiced when it saw life and movement returning to the figure, and saw the historical man Jesus drawing near. Yet he would not stand still, but passed our time by, and returned again to his own." Thus the historical foundations of modern theology have collapsed, Schweitzer says, though not those of Christianity itself.

Schweitzer introduces the pathos of distance between ourselves and this reconstructed Jesus whose outlook is so foreign and strange; yet he seems to gain the sense of immediate confrontation with a human being, at last disengaged from a tangle of imputed traits, and standing out imposingly in all his reality. The historical person, the object of scientific faith, remains the object of religious faith also—or so, at least, I understand it. In any case there is a striking shift of emphasis. We seem to lose from view those clarified insights into the heart, those purified feelings about

man's inner welfare, which were held to be the mark of Christ's divine inspiration and the burden of the message he had come on earth to declare. We are to feel that what is actually and humanly inspiring is the fervor with which Christ dedicated his life to the ideas we may impute to him with historical correctness. The weight of significance falls upon "the Will manifesting itself in those ideas." According to Schweitzer, the men and women who today suffer, fear and hope for the world's future and for the perfection of chosen mankind—who have in themselves the "eschatological ethic"—comprehend the historical Jesus as "a matter of understanding from will to will." And he adds that "our religion, in so far as it shows itself specifically Christian, is therefore not so much a Jesus-worship as it is a Jesus-mysticism."

Schweitzer's mystical concern with the personality of Jesus as a source of activating power is so at variance with Santayana's acceptance of all that he signified to the Gospel writers as revealer and symbol, teacher and savior, that one is led to imagine Santayana surreptitiously defending traditional theology. But it is Schweitzer, not Santayana, who is a theologian. Schweitzer, of course, is more widely known as an exponent of Bach and as the medical missionary of Lambaréné in French Equatorial Africa. The preachment of the Last Judgment in Matthew, on which his historical criticism leans so heavily, contains also the saying: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these . . ." It is with no desire to comment on Schweitzer's life and activity that I have referred to his book, but only to compare the speculative framework of his belief with Santayana's, who in his *Apologia pro Mente Sua* has called his own writings "confessions of faith." Santayana adds that his faith is carefully reduced to a minimum, and that "it is only as perhaps needlessly or too dogmatically exceeding this minimum that the speculations of others seem to me questionable." But Schweitzer's personal credo is presented in his closing chapter as a philosophy of religion that seeks to justify the change of emphasis noted above.

Schweitzer maintains that every view of life arises by the activity of a Will that penetrates and gives form to the material of

apperception (Vorstellungsmaterial). "The latter is subject to change . . . But the Will itself is timeless. It reveals the unfathomable and primary nature (Wesen) of a personality, as it also determines the final and fundamental specificity of his view of life." Whatever transformations the material of apperception may undergo—say between those Galilean days and the present—the views of life that "result" from that change will yet differ no more than do "the directions of will that constitute them." These propositions, it seems to me, derive from a body of speculation that Santayana has questioned in no uncertain terms.

The fact is that while Santayana was testing his assumptions by the criticism of himself, he was developing them on the technical side by the criticism of Kant and German Transcendentalism. His reasons for rejecting this way of thought are reiterated throughout the exposition of his own system; and he has voiced his intellectual and moral repugnance to it in *Egotism in German Philosophy*. He writes of Kant that "the psychological fallacy that nothing can be an object of knowledge except some idea in the mind, led him in the end to subjectivism; while his rigid conscience, left standing in that unnatural void, led him to attribute absoluteness to what he called the categorical imperative. But this void outside and this absolute oracle within are germs of egotism . . ." The oracle, Santayana says, was a survival of the Protestant conscience. But in German philosophy the spirit of the Reformation was still at work rejecting piece by piece the cultural heritage of Roman civilization. It was a spirit of protest appealing to unconscious forces and to the sense of living in an unformed world. So the categorical imperative gave way to the Transcendental Will. "The German philosophers have carried on Protestantism beyond itself. They have separated the two ingredients mingled in traditional religion. One of these ingredients—the vital faith and self-trust of the animal will—they have retained. The other—lessons of experience—they have rejected."

In distinguishing the realms of essence and matter Santayana intended to disinfect our subjectivity on the one hand, and our worship of sheer life or energy on the other. To use the word will

for a transcendental principle "presiding over experience," "breeding ideas," and possibly justifying every outcome, is, he says, "to speak improperly and mythologically, for actual willing requires an idea of what is willed." To Santayana the human will is anything but timeless. It is a temporal assertion of the life of the body, or psyche, which is the support of consciousness; and it is through spirit that we become aware of ourselves willing, of what we will, and of the significance of both. What is final in organic development cannot also be fundamental. No one denies that man's primary nature is revealed in the vital passions; but as the Transcendental Will cannot but include them, there is denial of the efficacy of consciousness in saying that Will determines the final specificity of man's view of life. On the contrary, it is consciousness that is transcendent with respect to its source, for it reports the occasions of its activity as fancy, feeling or understanding. By the Will of God, Santayana says in *The Idea of Christ*, men have sometimes meant a natural power that it is wisdom to obey, since it is the material power that brings everything about; while at others they have meant the *idea* of what a supreme and beneficent Being would will for them, or desire that they should will.

In clinging to the common-sense view of man, Santayana's philosophy is in a sense not new, and he has said that he would not trust it if it were. But this age-old view underlies the Greek, the Hebrew and the Christian religions. We call them religions, and not something else, because of what we feel them essentially to be: an undeniable display of the efficacy of man's spirit in proposing ideal objects and relations that may transcend and transform the willful life. This description, of course, would embrace the Marxian religion also; and we really have something further in mind: that those ideal objects and relations, though poetically figured, essentially figure the transcendence and efficacy of spirit itself—so that if religion is poetry, it is poetry of that kind. "In regard to the extent and detail of the realm of spirit . . ." Santayana writes, "all must be hypothesis and literary fiction, to be indulged in by poets, historians and critics as their genius may prompt or their prudence allow. In reconstructing the *moral* history of spirit,

however, we are not left without guidance. There is a traditional language, the language of poetry and religion, in which the essential fortunes of spirit are recorded, and these traditions impose themselves, like other external facts, upon each new soul; yet they count spiritually only in so far as they are confirmed or rediscovered in each case."

We may conceive this record as a vast and unfinished anthology, chronologically arranged, and divided under such arbitrary headings as myth, epic, drama, religion and philosophy. The various entries will fall together because of common perspectives; but under any heading, the earlier entries are not displaced by the latter. Nor are they altered by the fact that we turn back from the last page to read them again. They are still just what they essentially were. We may fail to understand them, but that is our failure. We may refuse to see anything in them, but that is refusal. They cannot transport us into the past, or bring it closer. Their poetic clothing may date them for us; if the exotic fascinates us, we are transported to the playgrounds of our own fancy. Whatever truth we discern in them can but widen our horizon or increase our self-knowledge. In any case we have no other source-book from which to draw the comparisons, corrections, warnings and enlargements that may serve to discipline our own imaginations.

One feels, in reading Santayana, that he has kept this anthology always open before him. In *Reason in Religion* he speaks of the effects of outgrowing a traditional faith. "The dead gods, in such cases, leave ghosts behind them, because the moral forces which the gods once expressed . . . remain inarticulate; and therefore, in their dumbness, these moral forces persistently suggest their only known but now discredited symbols. To regain moral freedom . . . we must rediscover the origin of the gods, reduce them analytically to their natural and moral constituents, and then proceed to rearrange those materials, without any quantitative loss, in forms appropriate to maturer reflection." It therefore seems as if Santayana could not well have left *The Idea of Christ* unwritten. It is a subject better suited than any other to

profit by his treatment and to justify it; and his treatment consists in trusting his analysis of reality to correct the errors of hypostasis or projection, while trusting equally the "intuitions mediated by knowledge of things" that he defends as the better part of psychology and history. It is his gift to view the mythical, poetic and dramatic expressions of the human mind in a critical perspective that entails no "quantitative loss" in their significance. He has read the New Testament as present testimony to the realities of man's nature as incarnated spirit; and I have tried to show briefly from his other writings that this inversion of the phrase Spirit made Flesh does not hang in the air or beckon from the past, but is embodied in a living philosophy of man.

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BOOK REVIEWS

ANIMAL FARM: by GEORGE ORWELL. Harcourt, Brace. \$1.75

Along with a number of other young goats, I was trained to the task of helping to mix mash for the pigs in the main pen at Mr. Pilkington's farm, Foxwood, but recently after an attack of dizziness, I was turned loose for a while in the dump back of the kitchen and in the lower river-bottom—the one which gives such a big yield because, although Foxwood is old-fashioned and neglected, the rise of the river every year enriches it so much that there has almost always been a large enough crop for all the hands, and something over to send to market. It's true that we animals have heard remarks from some of the hands (and even from the overseers) that the yield is declining, and that one of these days they will find the upstream fields all washed away unless some system of irrigation and flood control is set up. But then we have also been told that remarks like these are merely propaganda spread by Snowball (before he was poisoned), or else by Napoleon's agents, and that if we didn't worry everything would be all right.

But I was going to talk about something else. Of course all of us at Foxwood had heard rumors about what was going on at Animal Farm, right up to the time when Pilkington and Napoleon quarrelled. Most of the animals at Foxwood, the pigs particularly, scoffed at the stories in the early days when it was said that as a cooperative enterprise Animal Farm was doing pretty well. I noticed that they only began to be really interested later on, when it was reported that the principles of Animalism had been discarded as far as most of the animals were concerned.

As one of the goats, I myself have never really cared a whisker about what Mr. Pilkington's pigs say—which is perhaps a mistake, considering that they eat the same food I do, and are much more powerful. What interested me were the different reactions among those animals (including myself, more or less) who had a warm interest, if not complete faith, in what our fellow-beasts were trying to do at Animal Farm. I was interested particularly in the reactions of some of the older and more experienced goats, though they turned out to be the most varied and contradictory of all. Most of the animals just said that they always knew it was going to turn out badly. But some of the older goats were badly upset, and tears trickled down their beards as they foraged around the tin cans and cardboard cartons in back of Mrs. Pilkington's kitchen. An old guardian of mine, a nice, wrinkled billy-goat named Nicodemus, told me that though he had thought once that Animal Farm would pave the way to a better future, he knew now that power corrupts even pigs, and absolute power corrupts them absolutely; he saw no way around the obstacle that this realization presented. He said that since he was old now, his only hope was that Moses, in spite of his shady reputation, might be telling the truth about Sugarcandy Mountain, where good animals go when they die. After all, Moses *did* have wings, and could get around and see more than a goat.

A nanny-goat named Melpomene, who first taught me how to eat paper (though I learned later on from Socrates to prefer the best kinds of writing-paper) shook her head angrily and said that she just didn't believe the nasty things that were being said about Animal Farm nowadays. She said she thought Orwell must be a regular Judas-goat, and awful. "How can it be turning out so badly?" she asked. "After I have believed in it so much, and wanted it to be right? I'm sure that Napoleon is really doing the best he can, and that when the next generation of animals grows up, things will be much better. Just wait and see!" While Melpomene was saying this, my eye fell on an article in a newspaper which she had been having for dinner. It said that the goats on Animal Farm were now being made to jump through hoops all day long just to amuse Napoleon and the other pigs, and were being given only the most inferior kind of paper to eat. It may have been exaggerated, but Melpomene wouldn't look at it at all. She just spat it out and began butting her head against the kitchen wall, bleating, "I won't believe it! I just won't believe it! I won't!"

While she was carrying on like this (I wasn't worried, because Melpomene never hurt herself), Socrates came around the corner of the house. He looked at her in disgust, and then went searching for his dinner, very fastidiously, in the litter. I admire Socrates most of all the goats at Foxwood, and so I went and asked him what he thought. "I don't know, son," he told me, chewing meditatively on an old copy of *Scientific Farming*. "I only know what I see and experience—and a few other things," he added with a wink. (Socrates, like most goats, has his moments of levity, but fundamentally he's very serious). "I'll tell you one thing—I think the mess that Animal Farm has gotten into is just as much the problem of Boxer and his kind—and Benjamin, too—as it is the problem of Napoleon. And I'll tell you another thing. Animal Farm isn't the only place where interesting experiments are being carried on. Not by any means." What experiments he had in mind, Socrates didn't explain on this occasion, and your guess is as good as mine.

The opinions of the rest of the goats about Animal Farm are not very interesting. They can't get beyond their contempt for the pigs, and what they say comes down to, "The pigs may be big and have tremendous appetites, but anyway they can't eat paper, like us. And we prefer our bleat to their honk."

As for Boxer's and Clover's cousins, they hardly know what has been going on at Animal Farm, or even at Foxwood, for that matter. They have been hauling stones from Pilkington's quarry to build the walls higher (this has been going on ever since the affair of the two axes of spades, and I understand Napoleon is doing the same thing) and don't read or even gossip much. They did tell me there was a landslide the other day, and now every time they go to the quarry they are afraid the east side of it will fall down and crush them. But they just go on working, they explained to me, and hope for the best.

MAURICE ENGLISH

A LITTLE TREASURY OF MODERN POETRY: Edited by OSCAR WILLIAMS. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$2.75

This well-printed, convenient-sized anthology has more value than the usual book of this sort, but it has disadvantages of a peculiar nature. To begin with these, Oscar Williams has arranged his selections according to a subjective system of his own. Bobbing back and forward in time, the poems appear—regardless of author—in clusters about certain highlighted themes or moods, such

personal concepts as "Toward Eternity," "Shapes of Conscience," "Sons," etc. The reason for this is his theory that the reader looks to poems to "fit his mood or the pleasure of the moment"; that on reading a fine poem of Dylan Thomas on, say, War, his attention will then move naturally toward poppies in Flanders fields. Another reader, more interested in Thomas than in War, must shuffle through the indices in the back of the book to locate more of his work.

On the credit side, it is a large and generous collection. Any editor who provides us with the whole of *The Waste Land*, twelve poems of Auden, fifteen of Hopkins, ten of Dylan Thomas, twelve of Yeats, to mention certain important poets at random, has done a useful job. Critics of anthologies would always add to or subtract from the selections. For this reader, a poor showing of Pound and Edith Sitwell (to nine poems of the editor's), and the omission of so talented a younger writer as Robert Lowell, is much to be regretted.

Perhaps one should not quarrel with an editor's taste. One can say, however—with all the current trend of explaining, commenting, categorizing, in mind—that the serious editor will print the poems and let them alone; his job is to make available the finest selection and not to meddle; art can take care of itself.

B. H.

CHIMERA

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